

Celebrating Traditional Arts

Farmington Public Library Application Narrative

Western Maine Storytelling Festival 2011 Celebrating Traditional Arts Grant Application

Provide a one-page narrative including a description of the folklife or cultural conservation organization sponsoring the artists' presentations and a description of proposed traditional artists' presentations.

1) What is your proposed project?

On August 5 and 6, 2011, we will produce the first annual Western Maine Storytelling Festival in Farmington, Maine, featuring storytellers who truly represent the region and its oral narrative traditions. We have invited Gaylon "Jeep" Wilcox of Rangeley and Michael Parent, originally of Lewiston, to present stories from, respectively, the western mountains and Franco-American cultures.

2) Is the sponsoring organization's primary focus on cultural conservation, folklife and/or traditional culture?

Yes. The mission of the Western Maine Storytelling Festival is "to engage the western Maine area in storytelling and folk arts and the celebration of regional narrative arts by disseminating information and knowledge, teaching storytelling strategies, and presenting excellent performances."

3) Is the project a good fit between the artists' presentations and the sponsoring organization?

Yes. The selected performers and their performances are compatible with the mission of the Western Maine Storytelling Festival

4) What is the artistic quality of the traditional artist(s)?

Both are excellent and experienced storytellers and performers.

Michael Parent, a Franco-American Mainer, has performed as a storyteller-singer in both English and French since 1977. He received the National Storytelling Network Circle of Excellence Award in 1999 and was a keynote speaker at both the 2001 National Storytelling Conference and the 2005 Sharing the Fire Conference. He has been featured at events throughout the U.S. as well as in Canada, France, Austria, New Zealand, Ireland, England, Poland, Brazil, and Costa Rica. [www.michaelparentstorytelling.com]

Born and raised in Rangeley, **Gaylon "Jeep" Wilcox** has spent most of his life in the woods of the region, working as a woodsman, river driver, and more. He has been creating stories and poems all his life, and has performed at schools, at the Maine Festival and at the folk festivals in Lowell, MA, and Seattle, WA. He has been featured in several documentaries, exhibits, and articles, including the "Working the Woods" exhibit of the Maine Arts Commission (1999).

5) What is the significance of the traditional art to the community?

Public presentation and celebration of regional stories not only supports those who still live the traditional culture of western Maine, but also helps to integrate newcomers into the area. Although this will be the first storytelling festival in the region, a local storytelling guild has already been formed and monthly performances take place. Community commitment and enthusiasm about the festival is indicated by the range of organizations already represented on the Festival committee, including the Farmington Public Library, the University of Maine at Farmington, the Gold Leaf Institute Senior College, and the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. In spring 2011 the featured storytellers will be presenting programs, as well, at area schools and retirement homes.